

VZCZCXRO8672  
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHROV  
DE RUEHAM #3262/01 3391503  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 041503Z DEC 08  
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3944  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 003262

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)  
SUBJECT: JORDANIAN ISLAMISTS PUSH THE LIMITS WITH GAZA  
CAMPAIGN

REF: AMMAN 2424

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: The Muslim Brotherhood-linked Islamic Action Front (IAF) has recently launched a campaign to lift the siege on Gaza with a series of rallies and petitions and the proposed dispatch of a ship of humanitarian supplies. On December 3, IAF members staged a walkout in Parliament when debate on the situation in Gaza was postponed. The IAF's plans for rallies could well be quashed by the GOJ as they have in the recent past. Jordan's government is also unlikely to allow any ship to leave the port of Aqaba and has already informed the Islamists of the need to obtain permission to do so. End Summary.

The Campaign  
-----

12. (U) When announcing the campaign, Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (JMB) head Hammam Said blamed Israel, the United States, and Arab countries for not doing enough to ease the humanitarian situation in Gaza. He also accused Israeli forces and the Egyptian government of denying Gazans the ability to perform the Hajj. JMB deputy director Irhayil Gharaibeh added that the West's "calls for freedom, human rights, and democracy" were "fixed lies that no longer have any significance for the children, women, and elderly of Gaza who die every day as a result of the actions of the Zionist entity that is supported by the West and the United States."

13. (U) As part of its campaign, the IAF has also announced its intention to send a ship of humanitarian supplies from the port of Aqaba to the Gaza strip, praising recent attempts by Libya and international groups to break through the Israeli naval blockade. The IAF has not provided any further details about its plans, noting only that the ship would sail on December 20.

14. (U) The IAF is also taking its Gaza campaign to the parliament. During a November 28 debate on the annual budget, IAF deputies chided the government for turning a blind eye to the situation in Gaza and failing to take action in accordance with the November 26 Arab League resolution which calls on Jordan to send food and medicine to the Gaza strip. (Note: The Arab League resolution "assigns the Arab League General Secretariat to coordinate with the Egyptian and Jordanian concerned authorities to ensure the entry of food products, medicine and medical equipment to the Strip." End Note.) On December 3, IAF deputies staged a walkout when lower house speaker Abdulhadi Al-Majali postponed debate on the IAF-sponsored resolution to send the ship to the Gaza Strip. Commenting on the lack of debate, IAF MP Hamza Mansur said that "the postponement was planned in advance to kill our efforts to send the ship to Gaza. In my opinion, the session was indefinitely postponed in order to take permission first from the Zionist enemy, which we strongly reject."

15. (U) The IAF's announcement of its intention to hold rallies in support of the people of Gaza comes on the heels of two recent pro-Palestinian demonstrations here. During a November 19 march, hundreds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators walked from the headquarters of the IAF to parliament. On December 3, hundreds of Islamist-controlled Trade Union Federation members held a rally in front of the Egyptian Embassy in which they called for the opening of the Rafah border crossing.

#### Government Reaction

16. (SBU) Not all IAF protests are permitted to happen, as was the case with two pro-Gaza events which were denied in recent months. On September 5, the governor of Amman rejected a request for a sit-in in front of the Egyptian embassy. On October 10, the governor of Zarqa rejected without explanation a request to hold a rally in support of Palestinian claims to Jerusalem. Zarqa IAF branch chair Mohammed Al-Zuyud asserted publicly that "the Jordanian people as a whole put Jerusalem at the top of their concerns. I do not think anyone accepts incomprehensible justifications that prevent exposing the Zionist schemes."

17. (C) The Ministers of Interior and Transport have informed the Islamists that they must apply for permission before sending their ship to Gaza, according to MFA Americas Bureau Chief Malek Twal. In the absence of that permission (which he implied would not be forthcoming), Twal told Poloff that the ship will not be permitted to leave from the port of Aqaba. The IAF's antics were no more than "political

AMMAN 00003262 002 OF 002

theater" and the GOJ was keen to avoid the "embarrassment" of having a ship turned around by the Israeli navy, according to Twal.

#### Comment

18. (C) The Jordanian government is quite concerned with the situation in Gaza, both as a humanitarian crisis and as a potential flashpoint for violence and instability. The government risks inflaming the sensitive topic of Palestinian-East Bank relations and opening the door to further Islamist agitation if it does nothing. This time around, there is an added complication of Jordan's ongoing security talks with Hamas, which further creates the need for calculation and posturing on the part of the GOJ. While it is unlikely that failure to respond to domestic calls for action would lead to a breakdown in the nascent relationship, Jordan must at least consider its position vis-a-vis Hamas in comparison to before, when it had no interlocutor in the Gaza Strip. In the past, the government has co-opted the Islamists by taking a proactive stance, sending convoys of supplies by land to the Gaza strip. The upcoming Eid Al-Adha holiday may yet provide a window for those convoys to resume in an effort to quiet tensions.  
Beecroft